

AN
ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE
Middlesex Mechanic Association,
AT THEIR ANNIVERSARY,

OCTOBER 4, 1827.



BY ITHAMAR A. BEARD.



LOWELL :

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1827.

LOWELL, October 8, 1827.

SIR—The Government of the Middlesex Mechanic Association have instructed us to tender you their thanks, for the Address delivered by you before them, on the evening of their Anniversary ; and to request you to favor them with a copy of the same for the press.

Respectfully yours,

ABNER BALL,
BRICE SHEPHERD, } *Committee.*

MR ITHAMAR A. BEARD.

GENTLEMEN—My lack of time, talents, and experience, must plead an excuse for my reluctance in appearing before the public, and for the want of merit in the enclosed Address ; yet trusting to the candor of an ingenuous public, in compliance with your polite request, I forward you a copy for the press.

Very respectfully and truly yours,

ITHAMAR A. BEARD.

Messrs. ABNER BALL, } *Committee of the Govern.*
BRICE SHEPHERD, } *of the Mid. Mech. Assoc.*

LOWELL, October 9, 1827.

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ADDRESS.



FELLOW CITIZENS AND ASSOCIATES :

I AM, this evening, called to the performance of a duty, which to me is entirely new, and which, till within a few days, I had the hope and expectation, would be performed by one, whose education and abilities would enable him to give you such an address as I am incompetent to give. Having never been accustomed to speaking in public, I have, therefore, greater reason to claim your candid forbearance to criticise, than one whose profession calls him frequently to speak in public. Amidst the hurry of business, I have been obliged to indite a sentence at a time; as I could steal a moment from its imperious calls, or from the usual hours of sleep. My education being but the gleanings of the harvest, with hardly so much as the privilege granted to Ruth, of gleaning among the sheaves, and of gathering handfuls intentionally dropped, will, I trust, be an ample excuse from attempting to give you a dissertation on some one or more of the Mechanical Arts. That, I doubt not, would be highly pleasing and instructive, if ably performed. But a want of ability to do it in a masterly style, and the anticipation of that pleasure, from the performance of one amply qualified to do justice to whatever subject he undertakes, will, for me, be a sufficient excuse for not attempting it. From such as I have hastily prepared, I will make an essay, briefly to treat you with a few plain truths. I shall endeavour to enter into the every day business of our lives; to point out some of the greatest causes of mischief and misery in society, and some of the greatest sources of real pleasure and happiness.

Man is a being formed and designed for society : To deprive him of this, is to deprive him of his greatest source of happiness, and to render him a solitary, disconsolate, miserable being. Society being admitted the proper sphere of man, it next devolves upon us to prescribe such rules for the proper regulation of it, as will be most conducive to mutual felicity. This will be attempted by pointing out the evils to be avoided, and the duties to be performed by its members towards each other.

Some of the most prominent evils in society, are, intemperance, slander, an uncharitable disposition, a want of proper subserviency in subordinate stations, and an overbearing contumely in exalted ones.

In treating the subject, I shall endeavour to avoid personality ; and, if in drawing the picture of some of the evils of human life, I should, by chance, paint a real likeness, I must beg of you to believe me sincere, when I assure you that I do not intend a single sentence shall be, in any manner pointed at any particular person, but only at certain characters, and pernicious habits.

Intemperate drinking is an evil, which has, for some years past, been progressing with rapid strides, pervading every society ; the rich and the poor—the young and the old—the ignorant and the learned—the wise and the simple, of both sexes, have each had a full representation in the high court of Bacchus. My friends, is it not a shame ? a disgrace ? an indelible stain on the character of the noblest part of this lower creation, the only being made in the image of his Creator, that, for the sake of gratifying the insatiable cravings of an appetite, not originally planted in the breast of man, but created by indulgence, he should degrade himself far below the rank of the brute creation ? The Almighty planted in the breast of man inclinations and appetites, which, if kept within the bounds of reason, would ever be conducive to his happiness. It is not of the nature that was given us that we ought to complain. It is our second nature ; created by indulgence in unwarrantable habits, that causes the evil of which all complain, but, (I am sorry to say,) not from which all refrain.

How many, and even times untold, have each of us seen man deprived of his noblest faculties, by the intoxicating fumes of spirituous liquors, and rendered a ridiculous, a despicable creature ! How many families have we seen reduced to poverty and all its attendant evils by intemperance ! Have

you never seen a flourishing family, the boast and pride of the society in which they lived, ruined, and worse than ruined, by the intemperate use of distilled spirit ? What a curse upon man that it was ever invented ! Have you never seen the thorns and briers growing under the hedges ? the fences down ? the cattle in the fields ? the glass broken out of the windows ? the doors off of the hinges ? the children half naked and half covered with rags ? the once tender and affectionate wife a mere maniac ? These are the possessions, and these the family of him who has given himself over to drunkenness. Look a little further—His estate is mortgaged and gone ! His effects are sold under the hammer ! And the miserable man is dragged to prison, as the last alternative to satisfy his creditors ! The wife and the children are seen dragging out a weary life in the almshouse ! And, eventually, the poor, thrice miserable being is borne an early victim to the grave !

My friends, this is not an exaggeration ; it is a mortifying truth. Yet, with this horrid scene daily before their eyes, men will follow on after the alluring bait ! will indulge ! will dissipate ! until they are gone—gone beyond a remedy ! I repeat it ; I aim not at the person of any ; I wish not to injure the feelings of any ; yet I cannot refrain from aiming a blow—I would to God it were a deadly blow—at a vice, a habit, which, if not timely stopped in its fatal career, will depopulate this fair part of creation ! It becomes the duty of every man, who has in him one spark of philanthropy, to set his face wholly against this growing evil !

I have brought forward this subject, not because the members of this society, or the inhabitants of this place are more addicted to intemperance, than in other places ; for I really and truly think them more temperate, more industrious, than in towns generally. It is for this very reason that the subject is introduced,—that we may avoid the evil that has been so destructive to the peace, the prosperity, and the social happiness of other places. Much has been done, within a short time, to remedy the evil. And we sincerely hope that every effort to suppress intemperance will prosper, until we, as a country, shall be reclaimed, and restored to the happy condition of our predecessors.

Among the many evils of life, *slander* holds a high rank. Slander is a demon of the blackest hue. Many are its ways of insinuating its poison into society ; and it is productive of more evil than pestilence or famine. Few characters are

more despicable, or ought more to be shunned than that of the slanderer. Under his tongue is the poison of asps, and from his lips proceed lies and bitterness. He sows discord among brethren, and spreads dissention far and wide. The honest, the upright, and the virtuous, escape not the lash of his tongue, any more than those of an opposite character. His meat is to disseminate mischief, to disturb and destroy the peace of society. The habitual slanderer has at his tongue's end a slant for every one. Nor is it sufficient that he uses his *tongue* to that effect ; he likewise slanders with grimaces, with a wink of the eye, with a nod of the head, with a shrug of the shoulders, and even by pointing with his fingers. Slander consists not entirely in a false representation of a person's character in so many words ; but it likewise shows itself in all the innuendoes, the sneers, the scoffs, and the jeers to which the slanderer is accustomed. Direct and positive lying works not half the mischief in society that is wrought by the doings of the dealer in scandal. When you accidentally fall in company with a person of this character, who will not let one pass without some disgusting remark on his person, his dress, or his manners, set him down as a dangerous member of society, and avoid his company as you would a contagious disease, or an animal infected with hydrophobia. I close this part of the subject with a quotation from Shakespeare :—

“ Good name, in man, or woman,
Is the immediate jewel of their souls ;
Who steals my purse, steals trash ; 'tis something—nothing ;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands ;
But he, that filches from me my good name,
Robs me of that, which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed.”

The exercise of an uncharitable disposition, or rather the habit of thinking and speaking uncharitably of others, holds a conspicuous situation in the train of human evils. Whether it arise from envy or from any other cause, it is equally detrimental to the peace and good feelings of man towards his fellows. The constant and habitual exercise of an uncharitable mind, produces coldness between those who would otherwise be friends ; alienates the tender affections of the heart ; breeds strife in society, and renders it more like a society of ferocious beasts, than of civilized rational beings. To the uncharitable person nothing is right that does not

exactly conform to his views ; nothing beautiful that does not strike the fancy of his whimsical eye ; nothing good that does not conform to his notions of right and wrong. Heaven itself, to such a mind would not prove a state of happiness, if it should deviate from his pre-conceptions of it.

Charity is the brightest ornament of the mind, the purest sentiment of the breast. Wisely spake the Apostle, when he said ; “ Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge ; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind ; charity envieth not ; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil ; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth.”

Charity is the basis of every virtue, the sure foundation of every good principle in the breast of man. It is the source from which springs a modest, but not humiliating subserviency in subordinate stations, and makes both the master and the servant lasting friends ; and is especially valuable in such a place as this, in which subserviency is indispensably necessary.

In large manufacturing towns, many more, in proportion to the number of inhabitants, must fill subordinate stations, that is, must be under the immediate direction and control of a master or superintendent, than in farming towns, where every man is lord over his own cottage and soil. Many apprehensions have, on that account, arisen, that it would endanger our liberties to become a manufacturing people ; that it would lead directly to aristocracy. But in a country like the United States, in which so great a proportion of the population are, and must be employed in agriculture, there will, undoubtedly, ever be a preponderance against the principle ; and the thing will so far regulate itself, that we are not in the least danger from it ; especially, so long as the means of education are furnished so liberally as they are in New England, generally, and in this young manufacturing town particularly. Ignorance is the foundation on which to

build an arbitrary government, and the only foundation on which it will stand. Let the bountiful means of education be continued ; let the fostering attention of the experienced, the ingenious friend* of youth, liberty and improvement, be cordially received ; his kind attentions, and generous efforts meet a cheerful reception, and this, though a manufacturing town, will, we trust, satisfactorily prove that a manufacturing community can be something else than a community of slaves. Cordiality of feelings between the employer and the employed, between the ruler and the ruled, ought, as much as possible, to be cherished, and the idea of servitude done away.

In every society there is a mutual dependence. Entire independence is not to be found, and ought not to be wished for. From this mutual dependence we derive our greatest prosperity, and our greatest enjoyment. The rich are dependent on the poor for their labor ; and the poor are dependent on the rich for the means of sustenance. The sick are dependent on the physician for his healing skill and medicine ; and the physician is, in his turn, dependent on his patient for the means of support : The farmer is dependent on the mechanic and manufacturer for the utensils of husbandry, and for clothing ; and they are dependent on him for their daily food. There is no condition in life, that is not more or less dependent. Entire independence exists only in imagination. And are we the less happy for that ? No ; far otherwise. We are abundantly more happy for our being bound together by our mutual dependencies. The great cry for independence and liberty, would, if indulged to an unlimited extent, prove far more dangerous to real and true liberty, than the effects produced by all the manufacturing companies and mechanic associations, that will be raised in the nation these fifty years.

A constant confinement to business, a certain reasonable number of hours each day, under wholesome regulations and restrictions, is much more conducive to the health of the body, the improvement of the mind, and to the general happiness of man, than a round of loose, idle pleasures, in the company of the thoughtless, the gay, and the profligate. No man enjoys more than he that is constantly employed in business, who has few idle moments more than are necessary for cleansing his person, eating, drinking, and sleeping. And

* W. Colburn.

do not tell me, there are so many perplexities in a busy life, that you would be glad to be rid of it. The man who is out of employment, has many more perplexities, and far worse to bear, than those produced by the imperfections of the persons, or the implements we have to deal with. The fault is more in the state of the mind, than in any external object. The indulgence of a hypocondriac, peevish, fault-finding, indolent disposition, (could it be admitted there) would raise perplexities in heaven. If we would make ourselves easy and content in our situations, look at the best side of every thing, instead of the worst ; the greater part of the perplexities incident to a busy life, would vanish. They are a mere nothing in themselves, further than we make them by the indulgence of an uneasy disposition.

Let those who fill subordinate stations, be in due and quiet subjection to those who have the charge over them ; and let those who are placed to rule and direct, do it with prudence and discretion ; not with an overbearing supercilious air, but in the manner that a kind, discreet father would govern his children, and then the intermixture of ranks in society will contribute more to its happiness, than a separation possibly could do. The first thing in every society is order ; without it nothing can be done.

“ Order is Heaven’s first law ; and this confess,
Some are, and must be, greater than the rest ;
More rich, more wise—but who infers from hence
That such are happier, shocks all common sense.
Heaven to mankind impartial we confess,
If all are equal in their happiness ;
But mutual wants this happiness increase ;
All nature’s difference keeps all nature’s peace.
Condition, circumstance, is not the thing ;
Bliss is the same in subject or in king.”

This Association was formed for the mutual benefit of its members ; for the improvement of their minds, and for the good of society generally. May we be an example to others, of temperance, frugality, and industry ; of a charitable disposition towards others, and of quiet, peaceable citizens. May no disgraceful action characterize any of its members ; and may we aim at the general good of society, and our own mutual improvement. In doing which I would recommend that the Association meet more frequently than we have done heretofore, and statedly enter into the discussion of some useful topic, that will serve to improve the mind, make

us more intimately acquainted with each other, and more firmly unite us by the stronger bonds of interest and friendship.

Accept the grateful thanks of your friend and associate, for the unmerited honor conferred on him; and his best wishes for your future peace and prosperity, commensurate with the utmost wishes of every true philanthropist.